

HR

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Employee
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Program

FrontLine

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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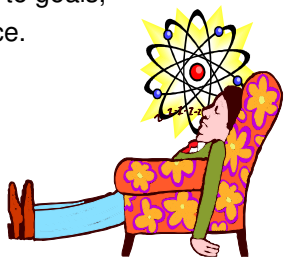
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Mastering Open-ended Job Interview Questions



Count on being asked open-ended questions at job interviews to not only evaluate your skills, but predict your future behavior, abilities, and most importantly, determine whether you're a "fit" with the work culture of your prospective employer. An open-ended question has no definite answer. An example might be, "Can you please describe a situation and the outcome when you took a professional risk?" Preparing for open-ended questions isn't easy, but you can think beforehand about the most important subjects of these types of questions. They include willingness to take risks, persuasion skills, teamwork, ability to learn from mistakes, communication skills, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, conflict resolution skills, demonstrating creativity, handling stress, goal achievement, confronting obstacles to goals, personal work ethic, and work-life balance.

Nap Time for "Left Brainers"



Studies show that a short 20-minute snooze can stimulate the right side of your brain. The right side is the creative, emotion-laden, and more abstract thinking part of your brain. Napping can be a great way to kick-start outside-the-box thinking, especially for those who are more left-brain dominant. Are you a "left brainer?" Left-dominant people tend to be more analytical, structured, linear thinking, mathematical, and are likely to view things sequentially in order to understand the whole.

If You're Stalked

Stalking is a crime of harassment. It's not a "personal problem" that you should keep quiet about at work. If you fear someone is stalking you, find out what state law says about stalking. Talk with your supervisor and/or human resources representative about the situation. Many agencies address stalking in their workplace violence policies and procedures. Your safety may also require letting the police, coworkers, and workplace security staff know about the threat. If you have concerns about stalking, contact your EA professional for a confidential, no cost consultation.



Couples Counseling: When Only One Will Go



In marriage, it takes two to tango, but when problems within the relationship require professional counseling, don't be afraid to go solo if your spouse chooses to sit out. Attending marital counseling alone doesn't mean admitting that you're "the problem." Even without your spouse, a professional counselor can provide tools and strategies you can use in your relationship. It's also a good way to discover your own inner workings and learn how you can be happier. Just because your partner balks at counseling today doesn't mean he or she won't join you in the future. In the meantime, why not take some positive steps for yourself right now?

Negotiation Skills for Everyone



The ability to negotiate is an important life skill, but you may be surprised to learn that you don't have to be aggressive or pushy to be good at it. Effective negotiation leaves both parties feeling satisfied with the result. Try your hand at negotiating with a simple technique called "reframing." Reframing involves two people placing their focus on what they are *trying to accomplish* (the need) rather than their *positions* (the demand). For example, let's say that a wife wants her husband to stay home for the evening, but her husband wants to spend time playing cards with his friends. These positions tell you nothing about the true source of the conflict between the husband and wife. Reframing the issue may reveal that the wife needs companionship because she's felt unusually lonely that week, while the husband may be looking for some downtime to blow off steam accumulated from a stressful work project, or vice versa. By addressing *the needs* instead of the *positions*, a new range of solutions becomes possible. When you are faced with conflict, try zeroing in on the other person's needs by asking effective questions. Listen carefully without interruption, and follow up by restating the answer back to the other person to make sure that you understood correctly. By reframing, you have shifted from being combatants to partners in finding a solution that satisfies both parties' needs.

Lazy Ways to Improve Creativity



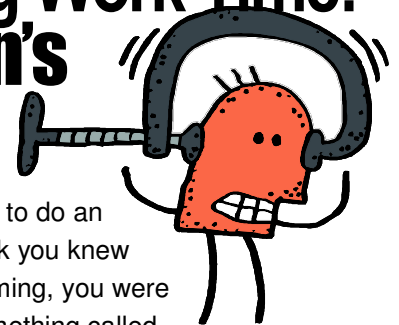
Creativity is the ability to imagine new ideas, possibilities, and solutions. Put simply, it's the ability to think and act in new ways. If you don't think that you are naturally creative, you may not be giving yourself permission to be inventive. Try these lazy ways of turning on your inner innovator: 1) Daydream: Your teacher may have scolded you for it, but letting your mind wander freely will allow it to leave the beaten path and explore new territory. 2) Brainstorm: Take an idea and bounce it around with several co-workers. Don't worry about getting off topic. Have fun and relax. 3) Play: Toss a ball around; grab some LEGO bricks and build a castle. 4) Meditation: Sit quietly. Reflect and contemplate the problem needing a creative solution in total silence.

Be an "Entrepreneur" for Your Employer



Take an entrepreneurial approach to your job by looking for ways to spearhead the creation of new products, systems, processes, or technology. Keep your eyes open for opportunities. Start with small projects. First, outline your ideas in a written format. Your initial document should identify arguments for or against a proposal. The missing aspect of most proposals offered by employees involves a lack of details. There is no guarantee your employer will accept your idea, but including good details will advance the possibility. Never let "no" kill your entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurialism is a state of mind. View your potential value to your employer in terms of how you can improve and add value to your agency's mission. This is called "enhancement." People and organizations are drawn to those who know how to offer it. Many agencies offer incentives for valuable suggestions, which may provide an added bonus for your creativity.

Squeezing Work Time: Parkinson's Law



If you took too long to do an unpleasant work task you knew was not time-consuming, you were probably a victim of something called Parkinson's Law. Parkinson's Law states, "Work expands to fill the time available to do it." The phenomenon combines procrastination plus busywork or distractions to avoid an unpleasant task until a deadline finally forces completion. The more time you have, the more likely it is that you will substitute unimportant and sometimes unnecessary tasks for those that are undesirable. Here's how to win over Parkinson's Law:

- 1) Tackle unpleasant work first.
- 2) Compress time by promising completion of tasks to others sooner.
- 3) Try using a kitchen timer and break tasks down into 45-minute segments. Work intensely without distraction. Break for 15 minutes. Repeat with additional 45-minute work segments and breaks until finished.